

Dear FCC,

I am Julie Springer, Vice President of Self Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHHH) for the state of Wisconsin. I am writing to you about a device that has great potential to improve the lives of deaf and hard of hearing people in Wisconsin in the hope that you will use your authority to bring about a positive outcome. The technology I am referring to is the CapTel Telephone System, which is an innovation of Ultratec, Inc. of Madison, Wisconsin. This product has been under development for many years and is nearing the end of its trial period in Wisconsin. The trial period ends May 31st.

The CapTel system allows for the relay of telephone conversation from the party the hearing impaired person is talking with in text, as well as sound, better enabling the hearing impaired to understand what is being said by the other party. This text appears on a display on the phone. It is accomplished through a relay service. However, CapTel is much faster and much less hassle than VCO, or TTY relay calls, and it is much better suited for business use than a standard VCO, or TTY call are.

On behalf of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Wisconsin, I would respectfully like to request that CapTel be made a mandatory feature of the Request for Proposal for the new TRS service contract that begins February 1st. I have been a CapTel Trial participant over the last year, and I am here to tell you that it has greatly improved my life. With it, I am able to converse with friends and family easily and take care of business matters that I need to take care of. It is crucial that I and others like myself be able to converse intelligently and correctly with others about matters of importance, and the CapTel system enables us to do just that. Cap-tel is an invaluable tool for deaf and hard of hearing people who need this device to acquire or maintain employment. Many of us had no telephone access prior to the introduction of Cap-Tel. Many of us who use Cap-tel at work have increased our productivity and are able to communicate at levels that were previously impossible. To discontinue Cap-Tel service would have serious consequences for many of us.

I would further like to request that between May 31, 2003 and February 1, 2004, that service be maintained through the current TRS contract holder, Hamilton/Ultratec partnership. Please allow hard of hearing individuals in this state who have come to benefit from the CapTel to continue with a service equivalent. Wisconsin has done an outstanding job to date by offering a trial and I hope will now be progressive and offer a service based on the outstanding success of the trial you've sponsored.

Any time and effort you may be able to give this matter for the benefit of the hearing impaired users of Cap Tel and future potential users of CapTel would be greatly appreciated. I appreciate your having taken the time to read this letter. Thank you. Please do let me know if the offering of a CapTel service is feasible.

Sincerely yours,

Julie Springer